

Learning Points – Opponents Land in Wrong Game after Interference

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E Deals

♠ J1053

←Mike

EW Vul

♥ K53

♦ Q4

♣ 6432

March 6, 2008 Thursday Evening Open Pairs Ms. Pat Newman,
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♠ 87	N	♠ AKQ962
♥ A876	W 6 E	♥ 102
♦ AJ8	S	♦ 103
♣ QJ107		♣ K98

Preempting opposite a passed partner can often result in unexpected benefits. We often preempt liberally – one or two steps removed from a disciplined call especially if not vulnerable. Here South got away with a poor call. Do not underestimate the confusion sewn by a weak jump overcall.

Steve →

♠ 4

♥ QJ94

♦ K97652

♣ A5

DealMasterPro:

EW: 4♣ 3N

5♠

NS: 2♦

The Bidding

East opens 1 Spade and South bids a frisky 3♦. This is not a typical preempt. There are 3 flaws – a 4 card heart suit, only 6 weak diamonds, and too much strength outside the trump suit. However the vulnerability is favorable.... West's negative double announced a 4 card heart suit and values. North passes. East rebids the spade suit and South passes. West bids 3 NT on the diamond stopper and overall strength. All pass. South is not happy with the dummy.

East	South	West	North
1♠	3♦	Double	Pass
3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass

Passed Out

North leads ♦ Q

The Play

Partner's lead from his doubleton is standard and is ducked around the table. Partner continues with the ♦4 and I cover Dummy's ♦10 won by declarer's ♦Ace. Declarer plays a small club and finesses the ♣8. I am determined to play the ♣Ace on the ♣King only, so I duck and the ♣8 wins. Declarer begins the spades top down. I am sure my shortness means partner stops the 4th round of spades. I suspect declarer is void in spades. If my club duck gave him an extra entry so be it. Perhaps I can stop him from running spades if I wait to play my ♣Ace on his King. I am surprised that declarer followed suit. I am confused about the club play but even more confident that I have to hold the ♣Ace for dummy's ♣King.

On the 2nd spade I have to find a discard. I am sure I need to hold 4 hearts so I discard diamonds from the bottom. It's a subtle signal but maybe partner will get the idea I have a club asset. After 3 spade tricks declarer reverts to clubs. What is going on here? I have to play my ace now but I suspect declarer has solid clubs and the suit is now blocked. It seems right to play a top heart. Declarer ducks two rounds. A low heart on the 3rd round forces declarer's ♥Ace. Declarer plays a club to the table and a spade to partner. Mike puts declarer in with a club, and declarer must lose the 4th heart to me. 1 club, 1 Diamond, 3 hearts and a Spade mean EW are down 2 for NS+200 and a top board.

Post Mortem

Full credit if you despise the preempt by South. Opposite a passed partner, a preempt is tactically useful, but not in 2nd seat opposite a partner waiting to bid. (Since we open all 11 HCP hands in 1st or 2nd seat, we can take more risk preempting opposite a passed partner). In fact if South chooses to bid, South should bid 2♦ not 3♦ – the suit is too weak and hearts are still a possible strain for NS. After 2♦ West will make a negative double and East will rebid 2♠. Now a 3♦ bid by South creates the same fix for West who will bid 3NT.

It's up to East to correct to 4♠. At matchpoints it's common to expect a solid 6 card suit to run (failing 16% of the time) and East might want a top score for the extra 10 points NT pays. East might also think that the risk of a ruff at spades (tipped off by the preempt) can be avoided in NT.

On the play, the spade intermediates might suggest finessing the ♠J10 in the North. While it turns out to work on this hand, let's look at the odds to see if that's a reasonable play. With 5 missing cards there are 32 possible combinations how spades split between North and South. Mapping out the combinations is impossible at the table, but worth doing here to see how this affect probable results.

North Holds	# Cases	South Holds	Finesse Tricks	Top Down Tricks
J10543	1	-	5	4
J10x	3	xx	6	6
Jxx	3	10x	5	6
xxx	1	J10	5	6
10xx	3	Jx	5	6
J10xx	3	x	6	5
Jxxx	1	10	5	5
10xxx	1	J	5	5
xx	3	J10x	5	6
10x	3	Jxx	5	6
J10	1	xxx	6	6
Jx	3	10xx	5	6
x	3	J10xx	5	5
10	1	Jxxx	5	5
J	1	10xxx	5	5
-	1	J10543	4	4
Total Index	32	Avg	5.19 100	5.56 107

Finessing wins an extra trick in 4 cases (green) and loses a trick in 16 (orange). That's 4 to 1 against the finesse in match point pairs.

If you have good information that North has exactly 4 spades, then the finesse is a 3 to 2 favorite. Unfortunately there isn't time to count out the hand – there's too great a risk that opponents will reach 5 tricks before declarer gets a useful count.

If you only need 5 spade tricks then ducking the 1st ♠ trick makes 5 spade tricks 30/32 cases or ~94% likelihood - declarer can pick up the spade suit on any 4-1 split. Finessing North brings the success rate to ~97%. Great at IMPs, but often avoided at Match Points where the extra trick can make a big difference in the match point results. It might be prudent to take the safe tricks at match points if you are in a contract the field will not likely reach.

Insuring a positive score will be necessary and a good score in a rare contract might match point well if the popular field contract fails.

Note how playing 4 rounds of spades before playing clubs will lose EW the game against sound defense. North South will manage 1 spade, 3 hearts, 1 diamond and 1 club as long as North switches to a Heart when in with the ♠Jack.

Recall that when planning your strategy for a NT contract before you play to trick one, count winners and start developing the suit where you will gain the most tricks (unless entry or safety require a different suit order).

After the ♦Q lead and ♦ continuation, opener can count 3 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and no clubs. Spades offers 3 tricks and clubs 3 tricks, but they are not the same certainty. Clubs offers 3 tricks once the ♣Ace is driven out. Spades might or might not offer three additional tricks depending on the split. Take the sure path in clubs. Defense will hold off the ♣Ace to eliminate an entry to the long spades. Just don't block the suit! With 1 ♣ trick in the bag duck a spade. Your ♥Ace will stop that suit and you are assured 9 tricks with options for a 10th if opponents have to lead a 4th club.

Winning a trick or two in the sure suit then reverting to the risky suit before opponents get control is often the way to ensure making your contract.

The hidden traps for declarer: 1) Needing to duck one round of spades to keep transportation in that suit, and 2) avoiding the block of the club suit – using the ♣King as an entry for spades is a trap.

Yes, a heart opening lead by North will guarantee the set, but after South's overcall and West's negative double that lead seems counterproductive.